

In the Claims

Please amend Claims 6, 8, 9, 13 and 21, and add new Claims 22-24 as follows, all without prejudice or disclaimer.

1 (previously presented). The personal care article as in Claim 8 wherein each of said outer portions of said first and second lateral sections is secured to one of said third and fourth side edges of said back portion to form a pant-like article having a waist opening, and first and second leg openings.

2 (canceled).

E4 3 (previously presented). The personal care article as in Claim 1, including an absorbent core attached to at least one of said front portion, said back portion, and said crotch portion.

4 (previously presented). The personal care article as in Claim 1 wherein the attachment of the outer portions of the lateral sections to the front portion comprises at least one of adhesive bonds, ultrasonic bonds, thermally activated bonds, hook and loop fastening, snaps, buttons, tapes, needle punching, and piercing.

5 (previously presented). The personal care article as in Claim 1 wherein said first and second lateral sections generally overlie said front portion.

6 (currently amended). A personal care article as in Claim 1 wherein the side edges each of said first and second lateral sections are ~~has an inner edge, said inner edges being aligned in an abutting relationship~~ each with respect to the other.

7 (previously presented). A personal care article as in Claim 6 wherein the inner edges are joined together at a line of weakness.

8 (currently amended). A personal care article, having a longitudinal axis, and comprising:

- (a) a front portion having a front end, a second end, a first side edge, and a second side edge, and a fastener receptive area (56);
- (b) a first lateral section and a second lateral section, each of the first and second lateral sections having an inner portion, and an outer portion including an outer edge, the outer portion being defined between the fastener receptive area (56) on the front portion and the outer edge of the lateral section, a releasable fastener on the inner portion of the respective lateral section having an inner edge and being releasably fastened to said front portion closer to the longitudinal axis than to the respective outer edge of the corresponding lateral section, the side edges, and an outer portion of each said lateral section being attached at at least one attachment site to said front portion, inwardly of, but adjacent, the respective one of said first and second side edges of said front portion, the one or more of said at least one attachment sites on the corresponding outer portion, which are closest to the inner edge of the releasable fastener, being closer to the respective side edge of the front portion than to the inner edge of the releasable fastener ~~each of said first and second lateral sections being free from attachment to the front portion between the releasable fastening at the respective inner portion and areas adjacent the first and second side edges of the front portion;~~

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(c) a back portion having a back end, a third side edge and a fourth side edge; and

(d) a crotch portion between said front portion and said back portion,

~~each of said outer portions of said first and second lateral sections being positioned on said front portion for securement to one of said third and fourth side edges of said back portion to form a pant-like article having a waist opening, and first and second leg openings,~~

strength of attachment, at said attachment sites, of said outer portions of said first and second lateral sections to said front portion being sufficiently weak that said attachments can be separated from said front portion without substantially fracturing said front portion.

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9 (currently amended). The personal care article as in Claim 8 wherein ~~said outer portions of said first and second lateral sections each having an outer edge extending outwardly of the respective first and second side edges of said front portion whereby~~ said first and second lateral sections are directly secured to respective ones of said third and fourth side edges of said back portion, without intervening material between said lateral sections and said back portion.

10 (previously presented). The personal care article as in Claim 8, including an absorbent core attached to at least one of said front portion, said back portion, and said crotch portion.

11 (previously presented). The personal care article as in Claim 8 wherein the attachment at the attachment sites between the outer portions of the lateral sections and the front portion comprises at least one of adhesive bonds, ultrasonic bonds, hook

and loop fastening, snaps, buttons, tapes, needle punching, piercing, and thermally activated bonding.

12 (previously presented). The personal care article as in Claim 8 wherein said first and second lateral sections generally overlie said front portion.

13 (currently amended). A personal care article as in Claim 8 wherein the each of said first and second lateral sections has an inner edge, said inner edges of the first and second lateral sections are being aligned in an abutting relationship, each with respect to the other.

14 (previously presented). A personal care article as in Claim 13 wherein said inner edges are joined together at a line of weakness.

15-20 (canceled).

21 (currently amended). The personal care article as in Claim 1 wherein strength of attachment of said outer inner portions of said first and second lateral sections to said front portion is less than strength of the securement of said outer portions of said first and second lateral sections to said back portion, whereby attachment of said outer inner portions of said first and second lateral sections to said front portion can be separated from said front portion without separating the securement of said first and second lateral sections from the third and fourth side edges of said back portion.

22. (New) A personal care article comprising:

a front portion having a front end, a second end, a first side edge, a second side edge, and a fastener receptive area;

ES a first lateral section and a second lateral section, each of the first and second lateral sections having an inner portion, and an outer portion including an outer edge, the outer portion being defined between the fastener receptive area on the front portion and the outer edge of the lateral section, a releasable fastener on the inner portion of the respective lateral section having an inner edge and being releasably fastened to said front portion closer to a longitudinal axis of the personal care article than to the respective outer edge of the corresponding lateral section, the outer portion of each said lateral portion being attached at at least one attachment site to said front portion inwardly of but adjacent the respective one of said first and second side edges of said front portion, the one or more of said at least one attachment sites on the corresponding outer portion closest to the inner edge of the releasable fastener being closer to the respective side edge of the front portion than to the inner edge of the releasable fastener, the first and second lateral sections configured to be stretchable relative to the fastener receptive area with the releasable fastener fastened in the fastener receptive area when the personal care article is worn as a pant;

a back portion having a back end, a third side edge and a fourth side edge; and a crotch portion between said front portion and said back portion, the strength of attachment at said attachment sites of said outer portions of said first and second lateral sections to said front portion being sufficiently weak that said attachment sites can be separated from said front portion without fracturing said front portion, the attachment sites when intact configured to stabilize the first and second lateral sections relative to said longitudinal axis to prevent said front portion from folding over on itself,

said attachment sites further configured to stretch away from or toward said longitudinal axis when the personal care article is worn as the pant.)

23. (New) The personal care article as in Claim 22, wherein the attachment at the attachment sites between the outer portions of the lateral sections and the front portion comprises at least one of adhesive bonds, ultrasonic bonds, hook-and-loop fastening, snaps, buttons, tapes, needle punching, piercing, thermally activated bonding, and combinations thereof.

24. (New) The personal care article as in Claim 23, wherein said first and second lateral sections overlie a portion of the front portion, each of the first and second lateral sections being free from attachment to the front portion between the releasable fastening at the respective inner portion and areas adjacent the first and second side edges of the front portion.